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Touchstone Energy®

Cooperatives Recognized for Their Success in Global Market

BY MICHAEL WELLS || CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER || GCEA@GCEA.COOP

The United Nations General Assembly has declared 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives. This declaration recognizes that cooperatives are serious, successful businesses that respond to social change and drive the economy by creating jobs in all sectors.



Mike Wells

Gunnison County Electric Association is one such cooperative. We can trace our roots to the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) established in 1935 with the primary goal of bringing electricity to rural America. Before the creation of the REA, less than 11 percent of all U.S. farms and ranches had electricity. Although electricity had been available in urban centers for years, private power companies had refused to extend lines to rural areas, claiming lack of profitability. Even if they were willing to enter the rural market, it was only under the condition that they could charge up to four times the rates charged in urban areas. This was not a realistic option for rural residents.

The REA encouraged farmers and ranchers to unite in a voluntary effort to form rural electric cooperatives that would bring electricity to their homes. Today, we take electricity for granted and may not realize how important the efforts of our predecessors were in developing the system that allows us to enjoy such a comfortable lifestyle.

Although electricity was the ultimate

goal, the means of getting it — the cooperative organization — should be acknowledged as the instrument of success.

Cooperatives are a different way of doing business. They are focused on human need, not greed. Members who own and govern the business collectively enjoy

the benefits of the corporation instead of profits going to shareholders. At GCEA our profits are reinvested in the infrastructure and any remaining funds are returned to members in the form of capital credit distributions.



International Year of

COOPERATIVES 2012

Another advantage of the cooperative form of business is that we are driven by social as well as economic needs. For example, when our membership showed interest in energy efficiency and renewable energy we developed programs focused on these areas of interest. We provide energy audits to help residential and commercial members learn how to use energy more efficiently. We also provide rebates to assist members with making some of the modifications recommended in the audits.

More recently, we have filled the load management, SCADA and AMI administrator position in our engineering department. This new employee will gather and analyze data to help us

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Cooperatives Recognized

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make informed decisions regarding best practices for serving our members as efficiently and effectively as possible.

In the words of U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, cooperative businesses remind us “that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility” at the same time. All of us at GCEA are proud to be part of the cooperative effort and hope you will join us in celebrating the Year of Cooperatives.

[employee anniversaries]

Ismael (Chico) Dominguez	Engineering Technician I 22 years
Marcia Wireman	Chief Financial Officer 16 years
Jerry Sharpe	Lake City Journeyman Lineman 7 years
Tammy Russell	Accounting Supervisor 5 years

**congratulations!
we value our employees**

GCEA Introduces New Commercial Lighting Rebate Program

Gunnison County Electric Association and Tri-State Generation and Transmission are offering a commercial lighting program as an incentive for local businesses that are members of the co-op to retrofit existing lighting systems with newer energy efficient systems. If you've already had a commercial energy audit, you know how valuable lighting retrofits can be in reducing your business expenses.



Rebates are available for fixtures within buildings and parking garages as well as canopy lighting and “wall packs” mounted to the outside of buildings. Rebates are calculated according to energy saved. Qualified applicants receive \$250 per kilowatt saved with a cap at 50 percent of the fixture material and maximum of \$20,000 per meter per year.

To be eligible for the rebate, your business must be located within GCEA's service area and you must have a current commercial account. All projects must be preapproved by GCEA and Tri-State before construction begins. For further information, contact Vicki Spencer, Energy Use/Communications Specialist, at 970-641-7359.

TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR BILL

BY VICKI SPENCER || ENERGY USE/COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST || GCEA@GCEA.COOP

More and more people are taking an active role in how they consume energy. Doing so leads to short-term savings for consumers and long-term benefits to our environment.

Gunnison County Electric Association takes great care to manage the cost of delivering energy to your home or business to keep it affordable and reliable. However, upward pressure on prices seems to have become a fact of life.

Therefore, any actions that our members can take to conserve will have an impact on energy bills today and into the future.

In the short term, there are simple things you can do that don't take much time or cost much money and won't have much impact on your comfort. For example, you can turn off lights and appliances when you are not using them. If you have a hard time remembering, you can install light switches with sensors that turn off lights automatically when you leave the room. Or you can plug your appliances into “smart” surge protectors that automatically turn off after a specific period of time. These work well if you always turn off your television at a certain time before you go to bed, or if you always make coffee at the same time each morning.

One way to find out which appliances continue to draw electricity even when they are turned off is to walk around

**Touchstone Energy®
Cooperatives**

TOGETHER WE SAVE

Go to www.gcea.coop and click on the Touchstone Energy Saver icon to learn how to save on your monthly bill.

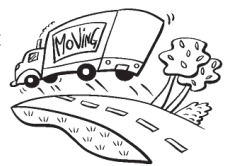
your house in the dark and see how many appliances have a glowing LED light. These indicators of “phantom loads” tell you that you could save electricity by plugging the appliance into a power strip that you can turn off when the appliance is not in use.

Other improvements include replacing heating filters regularly, replacing incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent lightbulbs, sealing air leaks around windows and doors with caulk, adding attic insulation and installing programmable thermostats. You will be surprised to see how taking these simple measures will help lower your monthly bill.

To help you identify your best opportunities for savings, GCEA has made a great tool available to you. It can be found at www.gcea.coop. Just click on the Touchstone Energy Saver icon on the right side of the home page and you will be on your way to learning what you can do to lower your utility bills. By involving the whole family, everyone can learn how to save energy while having fun.

Alpine Moving Joins Cooperative Connections® Card Program

If you've bought a new house or are just moving to another condo across town, Alpine Moving can help. As the newest member of GCEA's Co-op Connections® program, the moving company is offering a 10 percent discount off moving expenses within Colorado. All you need to do to receive the discount is show your official GCEA Co-op Connections® Card. To schedule your move, call Alpine Moving at 970-641-1525.



A Spotter's Guide to Distribution Poles

BY MAURICE MARTIN || COOPERATIVE RESEARCH NETWORK

Ever look up at a utility pole and wonder, “What is all that stuff?” Everyone knows wires carry electricity, but what about those attached metal boxes and other mysterious gadgets? What are they called? What purpose do they serve?

With a little information, you can understand a lot more about the utility line you pass every day. Not only could “pole spotting” shed light on the work done by your local electric co-op, but you just might be able to impress your friends and family.

Before you read this guide to pole spotting, please keep in mind:

- Utility poles are not for climbing. You may look, but keep a safe distance from all of the equipment described in this article.
- The measurements and descriptions given here represent common configurations, but in the real world, design varies greatly. Part of why electric co-op employees undergo such extensive training is to enable them to identify components in the field with a high level of confidence and certainty.

TRANSMISSION VS DISTRIBUTION

Distribution poles are those you see in your neighborhood, unless your distribution lines run underground. They are generally 25 to 55 feet high and made of wood. Power running through distribution lines ranges from 4,600 volts to 33,000 volts.

Transmission lines are designed to carry electricity longer distances and at higher voltages — 69,000 volts or more. Transmission poles are much larger than distribution poles. They range from 55 feet to more than 100 feet and the conductors are higher off the ground. Some large transmission lines use steel poles and tower structures.

In cases where a pole carries both transmission and distribution lines, the transmission lines will run above distribution lines. An easy rule to follow is the lower the voltage of the line, the lower it is on the pole.

FOUR COMMON DISTRIBUTION DEVICES

TRANSFORMERS are something most people can readily spot; they're hefty metal cylinders or cans that hang off poles. The transformer that connects your home to a distribution line lowers the distribution voltage to what you need in your house, generally 120 volts for your outlets and 240 volts for your air conditioner and clothes dryer.

At the top of a transformer you'll see bushings: ceramic projections with several disks running around the outside. Metal conductors are on the inside of bushings and the outsides are insulators. When bushings are attached to a transformer, insulators ensure the metal casing doesn't become electrically charged.

CAPACITORS look somewhat like transformers with bushings on top, but they have flat, rectangular casings. While transformers change voltage, capacitors improve the power factor on the utility lines. They prevent power from being wasted and help boost the voltage on long rural distribution lines.

RECLOSERS protect lines and consumers from short circuits. For example, if a tree branch touches a line, electric current will flow through the tree, burning it and overheating the wire. Eventually, this will result in a fault that causes a protective device, like a fuse or circuit breaker, to operate and interrupt the power. Circuit breakers “open” the circuit, cutting off the power.

Because many shorts correct themselves in a few seconds — as the high current will usually burn a tree limb away from the line — most modern circuit breakers have a mechanism that allows



Reclosers protect lines and consumers from short circuits and they allow temporary faults to clear, which helps keep service energized to the members without needless interruptions.

them to reclose a moment later, hence the name “recloser.”

Like transformers and capacitors, reclosers also have bushings. They tend to be rectangular, like capacitors, but squatter.

FUSES are also designed to protect lines and homes from short circuits, but they are one-shot devices. A fault, like the tree branch described previously, on the load side of the fuse will cause it to burn out.

High-voltage fuses look like a bar offset from the pole by one or more insulators. When a fuse blows, line workers have to go out and find why the fuse blew, fix the problem and fuse the line again to restore power.

These four devices are the most common on distribution poles. Once you know what they look like, you'll realize you've been seeing them every day for years.

Maurice Martin is senior program manager for the Cooperative Research Network, a service arm of the Arlington, Virginia-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

GARAGE DOOR SAFETY: AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE

Try this riddle: What weighs 600 pounds, deters intruders, and goes up or down at the push of a button? It's your automatic garage door, the largest moving piece of equipment in many homes.

Automatic garage doors may be a routine part of leaving and arriving home, but you should be aware of the potential for injury. Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., recommends these tips to make safety an open and shut case when it comes to your home's garage:

1. Always keep automatic garage doors fully open or fully closed. Some folks leave a small opening at the bottom for pets to get in and out for food or shade, but a small opening could also be an invitation for a child to try to crawl through, who might then get stuck. Another push of the button could send the heavy door down and cause injury instead of bringing the door up when trying to free anyone stuck underneath. If you encounter someone stuck in an automatic door, call your local fire department.
2. Read instructions on how to operate and maintain your garage door properly. Check your automatic door monthly to be sure safety precautions are working. Many garage doors boast a safety feature that triggers an automatic reversal if anything is encountered while closing.

To check the safety switch, place a 1.5-inch object, such as a flat 2 by 4, in the path of the door to make sure the door correctly reverses when contact is made.

3. Avoid walking under a door that is opening or closing. You never know when a malfunction may take place. Steer clear of a moving door.



Garage doors add convenience and security to a home but should be routinely inspected.

4. Know when and how to use the emergency release. You'll find a cord with a handle hanging along the track of your garage door. Always use caution when using this release, and only use it when the door is fully closed.

An automatic garage door opener is a common convenience powered by electricity. Just as electricity demands safety and respect, so does the equipment it operates.

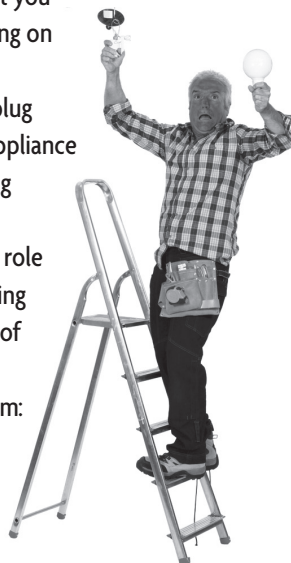
Be Safe if You Are Going Solo

Electricity deserves your respect. If you are planning a home project, it is recommended that you contact a qualified, licensed electrician to do the work. But if you decide to undertake a basic home electrical project yourself, consider the following important safety tips:

- Always turn off the power to the circuit that you plan to work on by switching off the circuit breaker in the main service panel.
- Be sure to test wires before you touch them to make sure that the power has been turned off. Test from the black wires to both the grounded box and the white wires, and test from the white wires to the grounded box.
- Never touch plumbing or gas pipes when

performing a do-it-yourself electrical project.

- Make sure that you are not standing on a damp floor.
- Be sure to unplug any lamp or appliance before working on it.
- Take an active role in understanding the condition of your current electrical system: its capacity, limitations and potential hazards.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Switch to energy-saving halogen incandescent light-bulbs to cut lighting energy use by 25 percent. These bulbs last three times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs and can easily be dimmed. Want to save more? Compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) and light-emitting diodes (LEDs) cut lighting energy use by at least 75 percent. Learn more at www.energysavers.gov.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy